

‘A Union of Hearts and Minds?’ The Making of the Union Between Scotland and England, 1603

Wormald, Jenny

Univ. of Edinburgh. School of History, Classics and Archaeology.
17 Buccleuch Place. Edinburgh EH8 9LN
jenny.wormald@ed.ac.uk

BIBLID [ISBN: 978-84-8419-190-2 (2009); 109-124]

1603ko batasunaren ezaugarriak teorian –itun bidez– eta praktikan finkatzen siatzean sortu ziren berehalako arazoak aztertuko dira kapitulu honetan. Horrez gain, nortasun nazionalen arazoa, Eskoziaren eta Ingalaterraren arteko harreman hotzen historia eta Erreforma protestanteak bi herrialdeetan izandako eragina ere aztertuko da.

Giltza-Hitzak: Batasuna. Itunak. Nazio nortasuna. Hizkuntza. Harreman anglo-eskoziarrak. Dinastiak. Erreforma. Monarkia anizkuna.

Este capítulo analiza los problemas inmediatos que se presentan a la hora de intentar establecer la naturaleza de la unión de 1603 en la teoría –mediante tratados– y en la práctica. Asimismo, estudia el problema de las identidades nacionales, la historia de relaciones hostiles entre Escocia e Inglaterra y el impacto de la Reforma protestante en ambos países.

Palabras Clave: Unión. Tratados. Identidad nacional. Lenguaje. Relaciones anglo-escocesas. Dinastías. Reforma. Monarquía múltiple.

Ce chapitre aborde les problèmes immédiats auxquels on se heurte lorsque l'on essaie d'établir la nature de l'Union de 1603 dans la théorie – à l'aide des Traités – et dans la pratique. Il analyse également le problème des identités nationales, l'histoire des relations hostiles entre l'Écosse et l'Angleterre et l'impact de la Réforme protestante dans les deux pays.

Mots Clé : Union. Traités. Identité nationale. Langage. Relations anglo-écossaises. Dynasties. Réforme. Monarchie multiple.

The reason for choosing this title, a saying of James VI and I, is because of the appeal of Professor Albaladejo's title 'Union of Souls, Autonomy of Bodies', which suggests a very fruitful approach to the subject of union. King James might have added 'souls', although, as I will suggest, there was a very good reason why he did not. And preserving the autonomy of the bodies of his Scottish and English subjects was a highly problematic matter, one which brought the king and the subjects of both his realms into conflict and collision, largely because no-one in 1603 really knew what the addition of Scotland to the composite monarchy of England, Ireland and Wales would entail; it was easier to say what was not wanted than what was, and shrill complaints by the Scots and the English were much more loudly heard than any positive comment or clear thinking about how the union might work. The famous antiquary Sir Robert Cotton produced a treatise two days after James's accession to the English throne, showing the way in which throughout history smaller kingdoms had come together to form larger ones; thus he argued that what was happening in 1603 was exactly part of that process whereby the kingdoms of Scotland and England had come into existence. And this new kingdom needed a name; what better than Roman Britannia?¹ It may have been historically accurate, as an account of kingdom-formation in medieval Europe. Politically, in 1603, it offered no solution at all.

Nor did the flood of tracts poured out on the subject between 1603 and 1605. They were written with a wealth of scholarship, looking not only to the histories of kingdoms in the past, especially Scotland and England, but to models of composite kingdoms in the present, in particular the Spanish *monarchia*, and they were more or less welcoming of the union. But they never actually suggested any practical answer to the burning question of how this particular union would work. They are extremely interesting, a very good guide to contemporary views of early-modern multiple monarchies. Nevertheless, pared down to the Anglo-Scottish context, perhaps the greatest guide they give about what was going to happen now that James VI had become James VI and I can be found in the hints, in the Scottish tracts, of fear of neglect, and in the English, of innate superiority; the Scottish Robert Pont and John Russell point to the first, the English Sir Henry Spelman, to the second, while Sir Henry Savile –whose tract ends delightfully on the note that 'I have raved enough and too much'– referred to Scotland's historical state of vassalage to England, even if he did not labour the point as far as the new union was concerned². And what is noteworthy about them is how short-lived was the *genre*; one of the tracts was written in 1603, a few in 1605, but the great majority were composed in 1604, the year of James's first English parliament when MPs were already showing considerable anxiety about, even hostility to, the possible implications of union. Thereafter, there was no interest in theoretic or ideological discussion of union. Instead, Anglo-Scottish bicker-

1. National Archives, London, SP 14/1/3, 'A Discourse of the Descent of the K's Mty from the Saxons'.

2. GALLOWAY, Bruce R. and LEVACK, Brian P., eds, *The Jacobean Union: Six tracts of 1604*, Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1985; see, for example; pp. 28, 102, 162, 190-2, 239.

ing and brawling, the killing off of the more incorporating union talked about by the king by the English parliament in 1607 and the now openly expressed fears of English domination articulated by the Scottish parliament of the same year, and evidence of continuing mutual dislike, were to be the characteristics of the Anglo-Scottish union in its early years. And in the seventeenth century as a whole, the nature of royal authority, tyranny, republicanism, were what exercised the minds of the scholars and political theorists and lawyers of the age. Union was not of interest, and would not become so again until the early eighteenth century, when the issue of what would in 1707 become the union of the parliaments was becoming ever more contentious; only then did it once more become a central issue in the parliaments of England and Scotland, and men turned to the writing of tracts about it. There is, therefore, a problem.

Because union became a 'fact' in 1603, and has remained a 'fact' for the next four centuries, it is all too tempting to assume that it had a kind of inevitability, even that it was desired. Lack of interest in the concept and nature of union, after the first two years, and the preference for refusing to contemplate possible developments beyond the ramshackle unity vested only in the person of the king, suggests something very different. In other words, far from thinking that the union of 1603 was welcomed, it appears that the very reverse was the case. James's union of hearts and minds was no doubt a lovely aspiration, but it was very wide of the mark. And perhaps we should not be surprised; for even after 400 years it can hardly be said to exist today. The annual series of Anglo-Scottish football matches was begun in the nineteenth century and discontinued in the late twentieth, simply because of the excessive violence which accompanied them; and the famous billboard on the occasion of the match in London in 1975 which proclaimed 'Lock up your daughters: the Jocks (Scots) are coming' did rather suggest that attitudes had hardly changed since the middle ages. More recently, in 2003, in a political discussion programme on the BBC, the MP Diane Abbott commented on the number of Scottish MPS in the Labour Government, and referred to their curious Scottish bloodfeuds which complicated government business.. Understandably enough, she showed little awareness of the historic nature of the feud in Scottish society; rather, she was introducing a *topos* to underline her critical view that there were too many Scots in high places in the British parliament. This of course linked in with mounting English unease about the impact of devolution after 1999 in Scotland and Wales, an unease felt more keenly about the Scottish parliament than the Welsh assembly with its more restricted powers; now, MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament) could legislate on Scottish matters, while Scottish MPs sitting in Westminster could vote on bills concerned only with English ones, and indeed on occasion ensure the government's success in getting them through. The Scottish response, far from acknowledging that there was indeed a problem here, tended to concentrate on pointing out that the Scots had been dominated by the English for long enough, which was emotional rather than helpful. And this issue, known as the 'West Lothian question', remains as contentious and as unresolved as constitutional debates at the time of the union of 1603. It led to remarkably outspoken comment, when the then Prime Minister Tony Blair,

was known to be going in 2007, about the problem of Gordon Brown's succeeding him, because he was a Scot; and to that outrage was added the further one that so, at that time, was the Leader of the Liberal Democrat party, Menzies Campbell. These are all things which indicate that four hundred years after the Union of the Crowns, the Scots and the English –and, for that matter, the Irish and the Welsh– still do not sit comfortably together, still do not wholly understand one another.

This does not mean, of course, that the union is clearly crumbling. Despite the rise of the Scottish National Party in the later twentieth century and its remarkable success in the Scottish election of 2007, there is by no means strong support for its dream of independence. Whatever the future, we are currently living through a historical phase of union; and there have been different phases at different times. After their horrified reaction at and rejection of James's proposal to call himself king of Great Britain, thus marginalising the name of England, in the long run the English resolved the problem by using 'England' interchangeably with 'Britain'. Indeed, there is a very early example of this. On 2 April 1605, Francis Bacon wrote to lord chancellor Ellesmere, advocating a history of Britain. Ellesmere duly endorsed the letter: 'Sir Francis Bacon touching the Story of England'³. The Scots, in periods when union was working to their advantage –the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries– did show some touchiness about their Scottishness, but were perfectly happy to regard themselves as 'North Britons', apparently not too disturbed by the fact that the English never called themselves 'South Britons'. It may be possible, therefore, to regard the union, whether of the crowns or the parliaments, as something of a success, at least at a pragmatic and political level, or perhaps at the level of inertia or even of fear of change. That still leaves the question why it was and is little more than that, why, socially and culturally, it has never put down deep roots.

To put the question in a different form, why have national identities proved so exceedingly durable? Is it possible to impose a supra-national identity on two peoples with very different self-perceptions and histories –and to that can, of course, be added Ireland and Wales. Indeed, even the phrase 'national' identity may be an over-simplification. Cotton's argument that the union of the crowns was an example of smaller kingdoms coming together as greater ones not only does not work in terms of the creation of 'Britannia', but hardly works for Scotland; do highland and lowland Scotland really constitute a nation? In the early seventeenth century, manifestly they did not. Hostility between highlands and lowlands was already detectable by the end of the fourteenth century, when the chronicler John of Fordun drew a distinction between the civilised and trustworthy lowlanders, and the wild and thieving highlanders⁴, and by the time of the union, that hostility had markedly increased. In the first decade of the seventeenth century, this was

3. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Ellesmere Papers EL 128.

4. SKENE, W. F., ed. *Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, Edinburgh: Edmonton and Douglas, 1871-2, ii; p. 38.

made worse by king James, the one man who had a real interest in creating some measure of supra-national identity. His case for adopting the name of 'Great Britain', set out in his proclamation of 1604, put great emphasis on what Scotland and England had in common, with 'A communitie of language, the principall meanes of Civil societie, An unitie of Religion, the chieftest band of heartie Union, and the surest knot of lasting Peace'; the argument was distinctly weakened, when a sizeable number of his Scottish subjects spoke Gaelic⁵. Hence, by the Statutes of Iona of 1609, it was enjoined on clan chiefs that they must send their eldest sons to the lowlands for their education, and that they themselves must appear before the privy council at stated intervals; and in 1616, the statutes were re-issued, with the additional insistence that no-one could inherit property in the Western Isles unless he could speak, read and write English⁶. He had also, anticipating his policy of the plantation of Ulster, attempted two plantations of Lewis, sending men from Fife to settle and civilise the island, in 1602 and 1606; both were disastrous, many of the gentlemen adventurers being killed, which makes it perhaps surprising that as king of England James should extend his plantation policy to Ulster which began in 1609. The king who sought to unite the kingdoms of Scotland and England was therefore the king who largely failed to unite the two cultures of his Scottish kingdom.

This was much more, however, than an English-Gaelic problem. In terms of community of language, the English may not have met Gaelic-speaking Scots, but they did acquire a king who, though Anglicizing the lowland Scots—a dialect of northern English—which had been his language for the first thirty-five years of his life, spoke it with a Scottish accent. Indeed, it seems likely that while his writings were Anglicized, he retained Scots in ordinary usage, if not in his formal addresses; Francis Bacon described his speech as 'swift and cursory and in the full dialect of his country'. That this was the case is supported by the sour comment by Sir Thomas Howard in 1611 that James should not only teach Latin to his favourite Robert Ker, but 'I think someone should teach him English too; for as he is a Scottish lad, he hath much need of better language'⁷. At court and in the city of London, therefore, any possible union of hearts and minds was threatened by the sheer presence of a Scottish king and his Scottish entourage in an English court already becoming conscious of the correct way of speaking; not only did the English have to listen to Scottish accents, but it may even be that they could have considerable difficulty in understanding what was said. Difficulty in communicating is a perhaps neglected but extremely important matter, when trying to assess the acceptability of union.

5. LARKIN, James F.; HUGHES, Paul L. eds, *Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603-1525*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973; p. 95.

6. DONALDSON, Gordon. *Scotland: James V to James VII*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965; p. 231.

7. Bacon is quoted by WILLSON, David H. *King James VI and I*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1956. p. 166. For Howard, ASHTON, Robert. *James I by his Contemporaries*, London: Hutchinson, 1969; p. 238.

More generally, 1603 was not actually an auspicious moment for bringing Scotland and England together in harmony, for both immediate and longer-term reasons. If the Scots and the English are uneasy with one another today, how much more was that the case at the time of the union of the crowns. At a superficial level, it might appear that for the first time for over three hundred years, there was some chance of friendship. Much has been made of the fact that both were now protestant countries, thus drawn together in the interests of mutual defence against the great Catholic powers of France and Spain. This was certainly in English interests, and to an extent it was shared by leading Scottish protestants who, from the time of their reformation in 1559-60, had sought closer ties with England; and ultimately this was formalized in the Anglo-Scottish Amity of 1586. But the Scottish approach was, as so often, more pragmatic than the English; in 1559-60, its protestants needed English support to overset the control of the queen regent, the Catholic Mary of Guise, with her French troops and officials in Scotland, and break the 'Auld Alliance' with France, that alliance first established in 1295, and now reinforced by the marriage of Mary queen of Scots to the French king François II. But with Mary of Guise's death, the French driven out, and the death of François in the second half of 1560, the English became less of a practical necessity. For the Scots, with a more realistic view of its place in Europe, did not endlessly fear a coalition of these powers against their heretic kingdom, as the English did about theirs. England's traditional enemy had been France, her new and ever-menacing one Spain, and after living through three worried decades, Elizabeth's intervention in the Netherlands forced Philip II to do what the English had all along anticipated, and move against England. The stunning defeat of the Armada in 1588 was one of the glorious moments of English history, but it was anything but decisive, and a much less glorious Anglo-Spanish war, which certainly tarnished that moment, and led to the renewed fears and worries of the 1590s, dragged on for the remainder of Elizabeth's reign. It is a telling comment on the difference between Scottish and English fears that when, on her death, her greatest servant Sir Robert Cecil was able to think about negotiating peace, the new king enthusiastically agreed with him, on the grounds that as king of Scotland he had not been at war with Spain and he saw no reason why as king of England he should be. The difference between the two kingdoms, therefore, do not provide grounds for seeing union between them as the next logical step. And even allowing for the degree of common cause created by their change in religion means no more than that there were new reasons for alliance between them in place of the former enmity; it did not require union.

Indeed, far from it. By 1603, there had been less than two generations of protestants in Scotland and England (for as English reformation historians now argue, England did not become a protestant nation until Elizabeth's reign). That was pathetically little to set against three centuries of Anglo-Scottish enmity. As late as the 1540s, the decade of the last of the Anglo-Scottish wars which, if intermittent rather than regular after the late fourteenth century, had characterized relations between the two kingdoms, the Scots were still referring to the English as the 'auld inemie' (old enemy). Before the last decades of the sixteenth century, the only writer to urge an

advantage in friendship between two neighbouring countries was the great scholar John Mair, in his *Historia Majoris Britanniae* of 1521, and he got little credit for it in his own nation⁸. But there was more to it than accepted habit of mind. There was an extraordinary imbalance. Medieval England had annexed Wales, had set its imperialist sights on Ireland and established a base there even if, by distracting itself with other ambitions, it failed to extend its control, thus creating a very long term and peculiarly intractable problem; and it had turned its attention to Scotland. The roots of a 'union' of the kingdoms of the British Isles therefore lay in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a 'union' presided over by the king of England. At the same time, the English crown had extensive interests in France; and from the 1330s, its French involvement escalated into the claim for the French crown, pushed by Edward III, Henry V, and disastrously in the name of the wretched Henry VI. Not until the seventeenth century did the concept of the national economy begin to develop, and men begin to think about what the nation could sustain; previously kings with grandiose schemes assumed that resources would be found, with sometimes spectacular results, as in the bankruptcies of Charles V and Philip II –or the pawning of the crown of England by Edward III. There was, however, one striking difference: Charles and Philip had a sense of mission as well as territorial ambition which was wholly lacking in the territorial aggression of medieval English kings. As far as England is concerned, it is not so much the historian's job to ask how could a comparatively small kingdom dream of conquest on such a scale, but rather what was the effect on a kingdom which could sustain such dreams when it failed. Ultimate defeat in the Hundred Years War –strictly 120 years– against a major enemy, France, was bad enough. But what of defeat against a very minor one, Scotland, and in a much shorter time scale, for apart from a brief period in the early 1330s, the only time when conquest might have been feasible was the reign of Edward I. And even in that short period, the Scots displayed a remarkable awareness of a concept of national identity; in Edward's particularly brutal siege of Stirling castle in 1304, at a time when there was no king of Scots, the Scots rallied to their symbol, the Lion, flying the Lion flag defiantly over the battlements of the castle, a concept which the Scottish poets and chroniclers of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, John Barbour, Andrew of Wyntoun, Walter Bower and Blind Hary, would do much to encourage.

By the mid-fifteenth century, therefore, the dream of conquest of Scotland had become the nightmare of failure, and now it was the same with the French. England was no longer a dominant European power, but an offshore kingdom, larger and richer than Scotland, but in much the same position. The bombastic Henry VIII –Henry V *redivivus*– did his best to insist on England's pre-eminent position in Europe, and –as Edward I *redivivus*– renewed the idea of annexing Scotland, carefully digging out old claims of English overlordship. Neither was successful. Foreign observers –a Venetian ambassador, the Scot John Mair– began to draw attention to England's need to assert English

8. MAJOR, John. *A History of Greater Britain*, ed. CONSTABLE, Archibald, Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1892.

superiority; 'if, in a foreign land', wrote Mair, 'they happen upon a man of parts and spirit, 'tis pity', they say, 'he's not an Englishman'. But Mair went on to talk about the Scots' reputation for pride: 'the French have a proverb about the Scots to this effect... The man is as proud as a Scot'⁹. Even the towering figure of Erasmus offers a similar kind of comment; 'Just as Nature has implanted his personal self-love in each individual person', he wrote, 'I can see she has put a sort of communal variety in every nation and city. Consequently the British think they have a monopoly, among other things, of good looks, musical talent and fine food. The Scots pride themselves on their nobility and the distinction of their royal connections as much as on their subtlety in dialectic'¹⁰. This is a very interesting, and puzzling passage. At first sight, it looks as though this is a very early example of using of 'British' for 'English'. But Erasmus knew perfectly well what 'England' and the 'English' were, and it is possible that he was indeed meaning 'British' –even, unlikely as it may seem, possibly the Welsh¹¹. That would help to explain why, despite his intellectual contacts with English humanists, he says nothing about that here. His list ranges from British and Scots to the French and Italians, and then goes on to eastern nations before coming back to the Spaniards and Germans, about whom he is fairly dismissive. Only the Scots and the French are singled out for academic prowess.

Early sixteenth century Scotland was therefore being given more attention by contemporaries than by later historians, and characterized in a very positive way, whereas for the English there was the desire to conceal fears about loss of European place. And indeed in this period both themes are evident. When he came to the throne in 1509, desperate to mark himself out as one of the greatest of European monarchs, Henry VIII had to face the bitter fact that renaissance culture was shining much more brightly in the court of his Scottish neighbour, James IV, than in his own, for it was James who presided over a distinguished circle of court poets while for Henry in his first two decades there was real paucity of talent. James IV even built a bigger ship, the *Great Michael*, than Henry had, and Henry had to put his shipbuilders to work to match it. English kings were not used to finding that in the rivalry between kings seeking to outshine one another in power and in culture the Scottish king was well in competition. And it was not only Henry who noticed. In 1504, pope Julius II listed the rulers of western Europe in order of importance, both England and Scotland were in the middle rank, with England only two places above Scotland. Durer's design for the triumphal arch commissioned in 1515 by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian, which displayed the twelve Caesars on the left and, on the right, twelve contemporary monarchs, put the Scottish

9. MAJOR, *History*; pp. 27, 43.

10. ERASMUS. *In raise of Folly*, eds RADICE, Betty and LEVI, A.H.T., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971; pp. 132-3.

11. Gerald of Wales certainly thought of the Welsh as a people of 'musical talent and fine food'. I am grateful to Professor Roger Major for discussion of this passage, and for this suggestion, though as he rightly emphasises, it is only a suggestion.

king along with the kings of France and England¹². For his first marriage alliance, he married his son and heir Arthur to the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Aragon and Castile, Katherine of Aragon. For his second, in 1503, he married his elder daughter Margaret to James IV of Scotland –the marriage which would, exactly a century later, bring their descendant James VI to the throne of England. Socially, intellectually and politically, Scotland was of greater importance than it had been, while England had lost its late-medieval dominance.

And as the sixteenth century progressed, there was little to reassure the English that they were, as they wanted to believe, and had, with some justification, believed in the past, that they stood far above the kingdom of Scots, however much they might remind themselves of the barbarity and poverty of the Scots compared to the civilization and wealth of the English. There was an endless series of pinpricks, and more than pinpricks. In the 1530s, James V successfully resisted Henry VIII's bullying to join him in breaking with Rome, and by so doing made himself an attractive prospect in the European marriage market, in which he was much more successful than the English king. After his divorce from Katherine, Henry settled down to his series of four English brides and one minor German princess. James was wooed by the pope and by Charles V, and married first the daughter of the French king François I^{er}, and then, when she died, a member of one of the greatest aristocratic houses of Europe, Marie de Guise –the lady sought in marriage by Henry himself, who reputedly rejected him on the grounds that she might be large in person, but she had a little neck (a reference to the fate of Anne Boleyn). Less dramatically, but equally offensively, when, in 1541, Henry proposed a meeting with James and moved his by then vast bulk north to York, James failed to turn up. Confidence and insouciance on the part of the Scottish king, frustration and fury on the part of the English, did nothing to sweeten Anglo-Scottish relations nor weaken long-ingrained hostility; all that was happening was that try as they might the English were no longer so able to look down on the Scots.

That continued even when the balance of the relationship between Scotland and England appeared to alter dramatically, in favour of the latter, with the English defeat of the Scots at the battle of Solway Moss in November 1542 and James V's death, at the early age of thirty, three weeks later; his heir was his week-old daughter, Mary. Henry immediately seized the chance to create a union of sorts, by proposing the marriage of that daughter to his son Edward, though annexation of rather than union with Scotland is probably the more accurate way to describe it, for Henry was reviving the old medieval claims to English overlordship of Scotland. When diplomacy failed, Henry turned to war, the savage and brutal so-called 'Rough Wooing'. His experience was no different from that of the Romans, or of Edward I; it was possible to overrun southern and central Scotland, but impossible to get further. After his

12. MACDONALD, Alastair A. 'Chivalry as a Catalyst of Cultural Change in late-Medieval Scotland', in SUNTRUP, Rudolf and VEENSTRA, Jan R., eds, *Tradition und Innovation im Übergang zur Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt am Main: 2001; pp. 173.

death, the duke of Somerset, regent for the young Edward VI, continued the Rough Wooing, winning a stunning battle at Pinkie in September 1547, but failing to win the war. Yet Somerset, carefully adopting less bullying tactics than Henry, might have had something to offer. He very carefully urged a union of England and Scotland as two equal realms. And his Scottish policy was not only military but missionary; he was trying to encourage the flourishing of protestantism in Scotland. He failed. Memories of English aggression were too forcibly revived, and Scotland turned back to her old ally, France. Once again, English military might, and even a new form of English blandishment, had failed to bring Scotland into the English hegemony. And it might be added here that although when English and Scottish armies met in major battles, the English almost always won, as they did at Neville's Cross in 1346, Flodden in 1513, Solway and Pinkie, none of these battles was decisive, any more than the great military icons of Agincourt and the Armada were decisive. Only the Scots could claim a battle which did decide the outcome: their one great victory over the English at Bannockburn in 1314. None of this did anything to boost the morale of the English kingdom; having lost their position in Europe after their defeat in France, they still could not even conquer Scotland.

As it would turn out, the dynastic union of the crowns was now just over half a century in the future. But in the mid-sixteenth century, relations between England and Scotland seemed to have made little progress beyond what they had been some two and a half centuries in the past, and that despite the new and dramatic element in the equation, religious reform. Traditionally, England was thought to have moved towards reform well before Scotland, with the Henrician reformation, limited though it was, and the move towards a more protestant position in the brief reign of Edward VI, which would flourish under Elizabeth after the equally brief reign of the Catholic Mary Tudor. Scotland, by contrast, remained Catholic until Elizabeth's accession in November 1558 gave Scottish protestants their opportunity; in 1559, the protestant party began to make advances, and in 1560, success came with a rush, made possible by English military intervention in the summer of that year. This broke England's short-lived ties to Spain, created by the marriage of Mary and Philip, and the much longer ties between Scotland and France, especially when Mary queen of Scots' French husband François II died in December 1560 and Mary herself, now obsessed with her self-proclaimed right of succession to the English crown, returned to Scotland in August 1561. The diplomatic as well as the religious map of Spain, France and the kingdoms of England and Scotland had, it seemed, changed dramatically. There was now every reason for alliance between England and Scotland, and perhaps even more than that. Even before Mary turned her attention to Elizabeth's throne, Somerset's idea of union had crept back onto the agenda; Elizabeth's greatest minister, William Cecil, was hinting, if in a *sotto voce* way, at the advantage of Elizabeth becoming queen of a united England and Scotland, should Mary's poor health lead conveniently to her death, or if the Scottish protestant lords should depose her¹³. But the Scottish protestants,

13. ALFORD, Stephen. *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

while they might welcome help from England, and would almost certainly have preferred Mary to remain in France while they advanced God's cause in Scotland, would not countenance this, and one can see why; union had more to offer England, who saw the potential for controlling Scotland, than Scotland, who saw the dangers of being controlled.

Moreover, what appeared to be new common cause in religion was very much less than that. Although it is the case that Scotland moved away from Catholicism only in 1559-60, whereas England had been experimenting with reform since the 1530s, there was a very considerable difference between the religious positions in the two countries. In the 1520s and 1530s, Lutheran ideas had come into Scotland. From the 1540s, Scottish protestants were more decisively Reformed and Calvinist than their English counterparts. And when Reformation came, the nature of the reformed kirk in Scotland was utterly different from that of England. Any idea of royal supremacy was blocked from the beginning. Visibly the Catholic Mary queen of Scots could not be supreme governor of the kirk, but it was not only that. There was a strand in Scottish Protestant thinking which can be traced back before the Reformation to 1548, which insisted that church and state were separate, and that was strenuously maintained throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century. It was only after half a century of struggle, in 1610, that James VI would finally achieve recognition as supreme governor of the kirk, and even then his role was distinctly less influential than that he enjoyed as James I. For authority in the kirk, from 1559, lay with a hierarchy of ecclesiastical courts, on the Genevan and French model, from the General Assembly at the top down to the regional and parochial synods, presbyteries (from 1581), and kirk sessions. The Scots regarded their reformation as purer and more thorough than the English, and kept saying so. In 1616, they called their church 'one of the purest kirks under heaven this day'; in the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, when they threw in their lot with the English parliamentarians against Charles I, they promised to 'endeavour' for 'the preservation of the Reformed Religion in the Church of Scotland', as opposed to 'the Reformation of Religion in the Kingdoms of England and Ireland'¹⁴. And it was not just the greater purity of the Scottish kirk. True to their tradition of thinking of themselves as a European kingdom, and an important one at that, they saw their kirk as part of the universal Reformed church; their Confession of Faith of 1560 was addressed to Scotland and 'all utheris Realmeis and Natiouns, professing the samyn Christ Jesus'¹⁵. The Scots were certainly prepared to acknowledge England's part in helping them to bring about their Reformation. But once they had done so, they displayed the same sense of superiority which they had shown in the political and cultural

14. CALDERWOOD, David. *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842-49, vii; p. 241. DICKINSON, W. Croft and DONALDSON, Gordon, eds, *A Source Book of Scottish History*, Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, III; pp. 122-3; my italics.

15. THOMSON, Thomas; INNES, Cosmo, eds. *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, Edinburgh: 1814-75, II; p. 526. WORMALD, Jenny. *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland, 1470-1625*, London: Edward Arnold, 1981; pp. 116; KELLAR, Clare. *Scotland, England and the Reformation, 1534-1561*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; pp. 211-2.

spheres. Religion for the Scots was therefore no more a basis for the British vision unilaterally indulged in by Elizabeth's great minister William Cecil than any other consideration; Scotland remained independent and European. If three centuries of Anglo-Scottish history made a union of hearts and minds unlikely in the extreme, the much more recent advent of protestant reform in both kingdoms was too fragile a veneer to make a genuine union of souls possible.

All of this means that it is wrong to think that the old and grandiose vision of an English composite monarchy which incorporated Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and the new idea of an Anglo-Scottish protestant bulwark against the great Catholic powers, somehow meant that union was some kind of inevitable culmination. Both old vision and new idea very much reflected the English view of Scotland's place within the British Isles, and its relationship to England; and, indeed, the annexation of Scotland was much less of a dream in the sixteenth century, except for a brief moment when it inspired Henry VIII, than in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, while the protestant bulwark could be created by an alliance. Their importance lies, however, in that they formed the ingrained attitudes which would underpin the approach and reaction to union when it came. But neither was the cause of union. The reason was much simpler: England needed a successor to the childless Elizabeth, and James VI was the successor who would avert foreign invasion by a French or Spanish candidate or civil war, should a domestic claimant make a bid for the throne. As one contemporary commentator makes clear, even the accession of the Scottish king caused worries. He began by stating emphatically that 'this kingdome is an absolute Imperiall Monarchy', thus raising a certain doubt about where James's Scottish kingdom would fit in. But having listed the twelve competitors 'that gape for the death of that good old Princess, the now Queen', of whom James was the first, he then goes on to show that Elizabeth was still desperately trying to deny reality: many Englishmen, he says, knew that the throne would go to the king of Scots, 'but to determyne thereof is to all English capitally forbidden, and therefore soe I leave it'¹⁶. The English succession had caused every-growing concern throughout Elizabeth's reign. By its last years, she was, as Wilson said, 'the Eldest Prince in yeares and raygne throughout Europe or our knowne World', and that was not a matter for pride but for lamentation; England was a suffering from a monarch who would neither die nor take thought for the future. It could do no other than face the prospect of union.

Scotland, by contrast, did not need a union. The Stuart dynasty was secure, for between 1594 and 1600, James had three children who survived, Henry, Elizabeth and Charles. James himself did not show the obsession for the English throne which his mother Mary had done, though he was not, of course, averse to acquiring another kingdom. Had the Tudor dynasty not died out, he would have continued to be king of Scots, without in any sense feel-

16. FISHER, F.J.; ed., WILSON, Sir Thomas. *The State of England (1600)*, London: Camden Miscellany 16, Camden Society, 1936; pp. 1, 2, 5.

ing himself an inferior monarch; from James I in the early fifteenth century, none of the Stuart kings, with the exception of Mary, had done so. When Elizabeth at long last died in 1603, therefore, the Scots had a king to offer, the English a kingdom to hand over. What an outcome of three centuries of determined English efforts at best to annex or at least to assert superiority over Scotland! And when one adds to this that most unions took place when a superior power took over inferior ones, this emerges as a union created in the most profoundly ironic of circumstances.

No union was easy. Not surprisingly, this one was exceptionally difficult, for neither Scotland nor England could behave according to 'normal' rules. In time, the greater size, wealth and power of the kingdom of England would bring about that 'normality', and create a new host of problems as Scotland sank into the second-rate and neglected power. But that was only in the second half of the seventeenth century. Although even in James's reign fears of neglect were beginning to be voiced, king James never did in fact neglect his northern kingdom, and indeed benefited from the fact that most of his Scottish councillors were men who had worked with him in the 1590s and lived on through his rule from England, so that this absentee king was not a remote and unknown one. And king Charles I, by causing the first of his three collision courses in Scotland in the 1630s, so that Scotland had its civil war and constitutional revolution before either the rebellion in Ireland or the constitutional revolution and civil war in England of the 1640s, ensured that the Scots had a major role to play in the crisis of the mid-seventeenth century. More immediately, the union in 1603 witnessed considerable jubilation among the Scots, who in any case did not regard themselves as inferior, and frantic flurrying among the English, trying desperately to assert a superiority to which they felt entitled but which did not convince.

This showed up within the first weeks of James's rule of England and Scotland. The English privy council, writing to him to offer him the throne on Elizabeth's death on 24 March 1603, found to their astonishment that their new king was not so overwhelmed by his immense good fortune as to rush south precipitously. Even worse, for the dominant Cecilian faction of Elizabeth's last years, was the discovery that the king, confident in his abilities, was not prepared to arrive in London under its tutelage. And perhaps most alarming of all was the fact that he neither knew nor cared about English bureaucratic procedures, for such procedures, so dear to the hearts of English governments, were not rated highly by Scottish ones¹⁷. James came to England as king, with his own style of kingship. He very quickly doubled the size of the English privy council; he brought in members of the faction which had surrounded the dead earl of Essex, Robert Cecil's great rival in the 1590s, and the Howards, another great family not favoured by Cecil, and he extended its range to include councillors from the north and Wales. And

17. There is a wonderful exchange of letters written between James and the English privy council in the weeks between his accession in march and his arrival in London in March 1603 which brings these points out beautifully, in Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ashmole MS 1729, ff 39r-90v.

he included five Scots. He made it clear that a closer union would be a major business of his first parliaments; and when the English House of Commons denied him the title of king of Great Britain in 1604, he took it by proclamation. He tried to make his court and household Anglo-Scottish, and when that did not work, in the privy- and bedchamber, because of Anglo-Scottish hostility, he made his bedchamber exclusively Scottish, and kept it so until 1615. He upset the leaders of the late Elizabethan church, archbishop John Whitgift and Richard Bancroft, bishop of London, by making it clear that he preferred the educational standards of the Scottish parish ministry to those of the English.

All this made it horribly clear how misguided was the earl of Northumberland's hopeful belief, expressed in a letter to the king shortly before the union that, despite the fears of that James, when he became king of England, would bring in Scots to serve him, the king 'will think that your honor in being reputed a king of england will be greater than to be a king of Scottes'¹⁸. That was a blunt assertion of English superiority. Cecil and three of his fellow-councillors, perhaps hoping to please their new master with a gentler version of the same message, wrote to him on 10 April 1603, giving him 'humble thanks for sending so grave and judicious a man among us as my lord of Kinloss [a Scotsman who had arrived ahead of James in London], who is already so good an Englishman'¹⁹. Trying to impose Englishness was one way of seeking to conceal the unpalatable fact that the English ruling élite was being infiltrated by Scotsmen, the chief of whom was now king of England. More bluntly, the flattering and soothing extolling of union by English and Scottish poets, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, Robert Aytoun, Alexander Craig, was rivalled, if not drowned out, by a flood of anti-Scottish writing by Anthony Weldon, Francis Osborne, Geoffrey Goodman, bishop of Gloucester and others, all portraying the Scots as beggarly, grasping, thieving, filthy and lice-ridden²⁰. And Anglo-Scottish brawling, at court and in the streets of London, was a further reminder that union there might be, but a union of hearts and minds there was not. Moreover, the king's hope of a union which brought the two kingdoms into closer conjunction than that which depended solely on the personal union of the crowns, went down to defeat in the English parliaments of 1604 and 1607; that would come about only after the trials and errors, the upsets and resentments of the seventeenth century, meant that the union would either be broken or strengthened, and it was the latter course which was adopted in 1707.

18. BRUCE, John, ed. *Correspondence of King James VI of Scotland with Sir Robert Cecil and Others in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth*, London: Camden Society, 1861; pp. 55-6.

19. National Archives, London, SP14/1/18, f.38r.

20. NICHOLS, John, ed. *The progresses, processions and magnificent festivities of King James the First*, 4 vols, London: 1828, I; p. 121; HEBEL, J. William. *The Works of Michael Drayton*, 5 vols, Oxford, 1961, I; p. 474; GULLANS, C.B., ed. *The English and Latin Poems of Sir Robert Ayton*, Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1963; p. 24; LAING, D., ed. *The Poetical Works of Alexander Craig of Rosecraig*, Glasgow: Hunterian Club, 1873; p. 25; SCOTT, Walter. *The Secret History of the Court of James I*, 2 vols, Edinburgh: 1811, I; pp. 1-298, II, pp. 1-20; BREWER, J.S., ed., GOODMAN, Geoffrey. *The Court of King James*, London, 1839.

Most unions of the early-modern period did not last; Poland, for example, retained its late fourteenth century union with Lithuania, but those it formed in the sixteenth century were short-lived. The Spanish *monarchia* certainly survived, but it held onto Portugal for only sixty years, and had to struggle to regain Catalonia. At the other end of the spectrum, in terms of size, was the Anglo-Scottish union, which also lasted. Given the history of Anglo-Scottish relations before 1603 and England's attempt to marginalise Scotland thereafter, it is not immediately apparent why. One reason is that which had brought union about in the first place: England had no acceptable alternative to the Stuart dynasty. Another owes much to the particular personality of James VI and I. James came to England as king, not English pupil. In Scotland in 1598-99 he had written books on kingship by divine right which worried his English subjects, far more, interestingly enough, than they worried his Scottish ones, who knew his style of kingship which, in practice, was very far from his theory; James was neither autocratic nor absolutist²¹. He was, in fact, a shrewd, skilful and flexible politician. His juggling act, between 1603 and 1625, was impressive. He began by reassuring his Scottish subjects, whom he had left, by making it clear that he would not subscribe to English desires that he should forget them, but was fighting to retain their equal status. Later in his reign, he began to make similarly reassuring comments to his English ones. In 1616, for example, in his speech to Star Chamber, he went back on his earlier and frightening intention of trying to unify the laws of England and Scotland, which caused huge offence to English lawyers with their intense pride in English law; now, this was restated as 'my desire was to conforme the Lawes of Scotland to the Law of England', and he even referred to England as 'the greater kingdom', tactfully quoting his ancestor Henry VII, who had prophesied that the marriage of his daughter Margaret to James IV of Scotland might in time bring about union, in which the greater would draw the lesser kingdom to it²².

The union of 1603 had in fact meant that the lesser had drawn the greater. Paradoxically, that was in itself a source of strength. For the twenty-three years of James's reign as king of Scotland and England gave time for the Scots to realize that they, who had never needed the union as England did, had not lost out by it. The English, while perplexed by their king's determined and continued interest in his northern kingdom, could take comfort from the fact that his heir Charles had been brought up in England, and would, presumably, be much more clearly an English king. As it happened, they were wrong. Unfortunately for Charles, he retained an interest in Scotland, but so clumsy and insensitive was it that he brought about open conflict between himself and his Scottish subjects, while his worried English ones in the 1630s had no answer as to how to deal with the unacceptable

21. CRAIGIE, J., ed. *The Basilikon Doron of King James VI*, 2 vols, Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1944-50; CRAIGIE, J.; LAW, A. *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies in The Minor Prose Works of King James VI and I*, Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1982.

22. McILWAIN, C.H., ed. *The Political Works of James I*, reprint, New York: Russell and Russell, 1965; p. 329.

nature of his kingship. Here was another irony; his Scottish and English opponents now found common cause, something to bring them together. And so the union lurched on, until, a century after its inception, it was transformed into what James had wanted, the union of Great Britain. The reasons for that were many and complex. But two factors may be mentioned here. First, the union begun by king James VI and I had been in existence for long enough for men to become accustomed to it, regard it as the political reality. Second, the dynastic consideration which had begun it all still held good. In 1707, there was no realistic alternative successor to the last Stuart monarch, the childless queen Anne, for either England or Scotland, than the Hanoverian protestant descendant of king James.